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Eliminating In-School Disciplinary Study Halls: A Study of the Effects VS Teacher Perceptions of the Disciplinary Environment

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Eliminating In-School Disciplinary Study Halls:

A Study of the Effects VS Teacher Perceptions of the Disciplinary Environment

BY

Lyle A. Rigdon

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FIELD EXPERIENCE

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

SPECIALIST IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

CHARLESTON, ILLINIOIS

1999

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS FIELD EXPERIENCE BE ACCEPTED AS
FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE.

June 7, 1999
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Thanks and recognition to my wife, Lonny, for her assistance, sacrifice, and patience throughout my graduate career at EIU. Thanks also to the faculty at EIU for constantly pushing those of us in the various cohort programs to expand our minds and abilities as professional educators and administrators.

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to the memories of my mother, Helen Coleman, and eldest brother Keith. Mother was always proud of us, without reservation. I am certain she will be there with me when I cross the stage to receive the specialist degree, just as she always was when I was growing up. My brother Keith spent his entire adult life in service of kids, community and church. His tireless efforts earned him the nickname and title he loved most: Coach. My secret wish as an elementary student was to be half the athlete that my big brother was. May they both rest in peace in God's hand.

Abstract

This study reviewed and evaluated the effect that elimination of all-day, in-school disciplinary study halls had on one rural East Central Illinois high school of fewer than 400 students. Historical data of student discipline over a 3-year period were gathered and a staff perception survey of current conditions was administered. This study compared staff perceptions to historical data collected.

Until 1995, Westville High School had experienced a sharp decline in overall student behavior. Students often left classes without permission, wore clothing that exhibited drug and alcohol slogans, and were belligerent toward the teaching staff. Additionally, IGAP test scores had declined to the point where the Illinois State Board of Education had threatened to put the district on an academic watch list if the Illinois Goals Assessment Program (IGAP) scores did not improve immediately. The administration and the board of education believed the falling test scores were a byproduct of the lax disciplinary atmosphere and concluded that quick action was required.

In the fall of 1995, the district administration started taking positive steps toward regaining control of the small percentage of students who were most responsible for disrupting the educational process. Student disciplinary rules were reviewed and updated. Guidelines for the administration's application of the rules were also enhanced. Although the disciplinary atmosphere improved slightly during the 1995-1996 school year, follow-up evaluation the following summer indicated a need for a deeper, systemic change.

Throughout the 1996-1997 school year, several administrative and procedural changes were made. Before the year began, a new dean of students position was created to replace the assistant principal position and to focus the efforts of the office specifically on disruptive behavior. All administrative duties and activities of the assistant principal

were reassigned to the building principal. During the year, several new rules were created to focus further on previously identified problems and on gang activity within the building. The district realized a measure of success with this approach during the year, but one of the disciplinary tools was becoming troublesome. The district in-house disciplinary study hall, considered to be the first major line of defense and the historic backbone of the disciplinary code, seemed to be failing.

While researching this problem, the dean of students discovered that the in-school disciplinary study hall room was too full to control and the number of repeat offenders was extremely high. It appeared the students did not view an assignment to the in-school disciplinary study hall as a deterrent toward continued aberrant behaviors. During the 1996-1997 school year, the administration began to seriously research the situation and to look at alternatives to the in-school disciplinary study hall.

After much debate, the administrative team elected to eliminate the in-school disciplinary study hall and to replace it with a series of progressive, 2-hour after-school detentions and 4-hour Saturday detentions. The new disciplinary motto became, "If you misbehave on our time, you will suffer the consequences for it on yours." This new tactic was expected to be so distasteful to the students that it would become the deterrent that the in-school disciplinary study hall had failed to be. This study details the 2-year history of that change, its impact on our students, and the teachers' perceptions of the new disciplinary environment.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	ix
Chapter 1: Overview	1
Background.....	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Research Questions	2
Assumptions	2
Limitations.....	3
Delimitations.....	3
Operational Definitions	3
Uniqueness of the Study.....	5
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature.....	6
Rationale.....	6
Literature and Research Reviewed	7
Chapter 3: Design of the Study	11
General Design.....	11
Sample and Population.....	11
Data Collection and Instrumentation	12
Data Analysis.....	13
Chapter 4: Results.....	14
Overview	14
Results for Research Question 1	15

Results for Research Question 2	15
Results for Research Question 3	16
Results for Research Question 4	17
Chapter 5: Summary, Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations	26
Summary	26
Findings	27
Conclusions	29
Recommendations	31
References	33
Appendix A: Westville High School Teacher Feedback Survey	34

List of Tables

Table 1: Responses to Survey Statement 1	17
Table 2: Responses to Survey Statement 2	18
Table 3: Responses to Survey Statement 3	18
Table 4: Responses to Survey Statement 4	19
Table 5: Responses to Survey Statement 5	19
Table 6: Responses to Survey Statement 6	20
Table 7: Responses to Survey Statement 7	21
Table 8: Responses to Survey Statement 8	21
Table 9: Responses to Survey Statement 9	22
Table 10: Responses to Survey Statement 10	22
Table 11: Responses to Survey Statement 11	23
Table 12: Responses to Survey Statement 12	24
Table 13: Responses to Survey Statement 13	24

List of Figures

Figure 1: Effect of eliminating in-school disciplinary study hall on number of after-school detentions.	14
Figure 2: Effect of eliminating in-school disciplinary study hall on the number of out-of-school suspensions.....	15
Figure 3: Effect of elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall on number of expulsions.	16

Chapter 1

Overview

Background

As the new principal of Westville High School, the researcher quickly became aware of severe concerns regarding student discipline. According to teachers, the students were out of control. Personal observation during the first few days of school confirmed this. Students wore clothing bearing drug, alcohol, and tobacco advertising; crude messages; and offensive artwork sexually degrading to women. Students shouted and shoved each other in the halls, left food and food trays on the lunchroom tables and floor, and freely roamed the halls without passes. It was, in a word, overwhelming.

Through the first year, the administrative team worked to apply the established rules and to develop a few new ones to combat student trends that aggravated the situation (e.g., sagging pants). During this time, two things became apparent. First, the assistant principal would not apply the rules consistently. Second, the backbone of the current discipline system, the in-school disciplinary study hall, was not working.

Although it was not completely clear when the in-school disciplinary study hall had come into use, the value of its continuing existence was questionable. It was apparent that teachers sent students to the study room in huge numbers, but most of the students were repeat offenders who viewed the punishment as a vacation. Notably, this consequence had no effect on students' behavior. In fact, many seemed to look forward to spending the day

away from classes. It seemed that, on occasion, students intentionally broke the rules so that they could go to the in-school disciplinary study hall and avoid attending classes, taking tests, and submitting homework assignments.

Statement of the Problem

This study addressed the following specific problem: What effect did elimination of the all-day, in-school disciplinary study hall have on after-school detentions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and the perceptions of staff members on overall disciplinary status? The field study identified and quantified those effects.

Research Questions

The specific questions addressed by this study include the following:

1. What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the number of after-school detentions?
2. What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the number of out-of-school suspensions?
3. What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the number of expulsions?
4. What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the perceptions of staff regarding the school's disciplinary atmosphere following the elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall?

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made of the teachers who responded to the building-wide survey:

1. Teacher answers were based on their direct experience and not on current trends or

second-hand information.

2. Teachers were familiar with conditions of overcrowding and lack of control in the in-school disciplinary study hall.
3. Teachers were reluctant to remove the in-school disciplinary study hall.
4. Teachers were expecting more disciplinary problems following the removal of the in-school disciplinary study hall.
5. The number of teachers responding to the survey would be sufficient to determine the perceptions of the staff as a whole.

Limitations

The following limitations existed:

1. The data could be obtained only from teachers in Westville High School Community Unit School District (CUSD) #2. Therefore, caution needs to be exercised when generalizing the findings to disciplinary circumstances in other schools.
2. The reference to discipline in the school was limited to those student actions that were quantifiable. At the time of the survey, no data existed to compare and contrast the disciplinary environment with the learning atmosphere.

Delimitations

This study did not include research on student detentions, suspensions, and expulsions by demographic characteristic attributes such as race, attendance, family income, number of parents in the home, or family make-up. This study included only teachers from Westville High School CUSD #2.

Operational Definitions

1. Thirty-minute detention. Holding students within a controlled environment before or

after school for 30 minutes for some minor disciplinary infraction. Usually assigned by teachers, but may on occasion be assigned by the dean of students or the principal.

2. Two-hour detention. Holding students after school for 2 hours for repeated minor disciplinary infractions or for more serious handbook infractions. This type of detention is assigned only by the dean of students or the principal.
3. Expulsion. Removal of a student from regular attendance for more than 10 school days and often for 1 school year. For certain weapons violations, the school code provides for expulsions in excess of 1 year, but for no more than 2 years.
4. In-school disciplinary study hall. Removal of a student from regular classes for placement in a small, closely supervised group that is segregated from the student body. Students in this group often have passing periods and lunches at times scheduled just for their use. They are required to work during the entire time of assignment to the in-school disciplinary study hall. Student liberties are greatly reduced and rules of conduct over and above those in the student handbook apply to students detained in an in-school disciplinary study hall.
5. Saturday study hall. A 4-hour study hall that meets on Saturday mornings. Saturday study halls are occasionally assigned to students in place of the traditional in-school disciplinary study hall. A student is assigned a Saturday study hall for repeated poor behavior or serious first-time infractions.
6. Suspension. Removal of a student from regular attendance for disciplinary infractions of a repeated or serious nature. Suspensions are approved by the administration and are for 10 or fewer consecutive days or, in the case of IEP students, 10 aggregate days.

7. Survey. A written assessment instrument designed to determine teacher perceptions of the disciplinary atmosphere of the school following the elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall.

Uniqueness of the Study

This study reported the efforts of one school district to deal with student discipline more effectively than through traditional efforts. Students need to be in class to learn most effectively. Removing students from class for one or more days to sit in a study hall cannot replace time spent in a classroom. In fact, it is often counterproductive to learning. In addition, the educational return on the district's financial investment is questionable. Using a teacher to oversee a small group of disruptive students in the disciplinary study hall rather than to teach regular classes available to the entire student body is fiscally irresponsible. At a time when many secondary school administrators support in-school disciplinary study halls as a corrective tool, Westville High School CUSD #2 tried an alternative approach. This study is also unique in that it compares teacher perceptions of the new procedures to actual data compiled over a 3-year period.

This paper quantified the effects of eliminating the in-school disciplinary study hall in one school with the hope that other school districts might benefit.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Rationale

During the researcher's first few months as the new principal of Westville High School, a school with fewer than 400 students, it became apparent that the standard disciplinary tools and procedures were faulty. The number of students receiving out-of-school suspensions and those being assigned in-school disciplinary study halls was high and growing. During the 1994-1995 school year, Westville High School had the highest suspension and expulsion rates for Vermilion county—the statistical apex of an 8-year trend. Clearly, the students were not responding to the administrative effort to control the environment.

At the same time, national studies indicated that the level of violence where a student was killed or injured in school was increasing. A full 10% of teachers and students in public schools say they have been the victim of a violent act while in school or on school property (Hamburger, 1993). Staff were concerned that, if the misbehavior could not be contained and curtailed, their school might be the next national news headline. Teachers, who are closest to the problem and most likely to be the brunt of a violent outburst, advocate taking measures to emphasize school discipline and safety.

In 1993, the National School Board Association (NSBA) surveyed 2,000 school districts regarding violence in schools. A full 80% of the schools surveyed indicated that incidences of school violence were worse in number and severity than just five years before (National School Boards Association, 1993).

It has been said that school discipline has two main goals: to ensure the safety of

staff and students and to create an environment that is conducive to learning (Lawrence & Olvey, 1994). Student violence and misbehavior clearly violate those two goals.

Fortunately, most incidents of student misbehavior will not garner national headlines. However, in public school instruction, verbal assaults occur frequently, and teachers are conscious of the threat of serious violence. News reports of school shootings, stories of student misdeeds from neighboring schools—and sometimes their own, and tales of local parents or siblings being arrested for violent crimes and drug-related activities concern educators, who wonder if students living in such households are at risk for committing violent crimes. Administrators fear that a student recommended for expulsion will come back armed and seeking vengeance.

The threat of serious violence in schools was the rationale for this research. Specifically, the nature of the rules infractions as well as the increasing number of serious incidents, including fights with weapons, leading up to the 1995-1996 school year, drove the Westville High School CUSD #2 board and the administration to action.

Literature and Research Reviewed

Where does the school district's job start and end with regard to student discipline and authority within the school? Braun (1994) stated that "teachers and other certificated authority have a statutory duty to maintain discipline on school grounds" and that "each school board must establish a policy on student discipline" (p. 174). These two statements couple the local school authority's *duty* to maintain day-to-day discipline (through teachers and administrators) with its *authority and responsibility* to determine and enforce the disciplinary rules reflective of the local community (by the local school board).

These two statutory statements combine to provide an environment driven by the

doctrine of *loco parentis*, or in lieu of parents. The statutes are not all encompassing, however. The local district must be wary of employees' acts that could be construed as negligent, willful, or wanton. District personnel must understand the difference between proactive, reactive, and excessively punitive authority. However, where the line is drawn in any specific situation is often defined in court.

In the face of the historic and ongoing controversy that surrounds discipline techniques and effectiveness, this paper supports the school's responsibility to maintain authority. Historically, punitive discipline has been favored over social intervention. Although current social theory supports increased intervention, punitive discipline still appears to be the backbone of disciplinary action and policy.

Russian (1995) asserted that students want discipline. Russian, an assistant principal in Michigan, helped the local school district construct an elaborate point system that described and categorized poor behaviors into 10 separate, well-defined areas. Each offense that fell into a specific area was given a predetermined point value. Then, point value totals were assigned progressive levels of punishment. For example, a student who had "earned" 84 or more points in any term was automatically referred to the board of education's hearing office for an expulsion hearing. The student may have garnered the expulsion point level over time, through many minor behavior problems, or all at once as a result of a severe rule infraction. Russian's study received much discussion at the local level and may become part of Westville High School's student disciplinary policies at some point in the future.

Allevar-Fleming (1994) advocated a seven-step approach to developing school discipline policies and procedures. A principal at St. Cletus High School in Gretna,

Louisiana, Allevar-Fleming developed these steps:

1. Assembling staff into teams
2. Appointing a leader to guide each team
3. Having each team develop a list of behavior problems that disrupt the school
4. Classifying behavior problems on the lists into major and minor offenses
5. Reviewing the mission policy for the school
6. Developing progressive consequences for unacceptable behaviors
7. Developing a student handbook detailing all of the collected information

On the surface, this seems to be a reasonable approach. However, the process and implementation details lack sufficient development. While many of the steps are worthwhile, the plan is not all encompassing. Adding students and parents to each of the teams or adding a representative from each group to a final review committee would strengthen the process. In addition, Allevar-Fleming avoids any explanation of who is responsible for enforcement of the rules developed by the teams. Without clear understanding of enforcement and authority, the rules are meaningless.

According to an article by Wynne (1994), large metropolitan schools had begun to realize that their indifference toward aberrant behavior contributed to discipline problems. Wynne documents how the Chicago school system reverted to a more stringent system of deterrence that included elements such as school-wide rules written in clear language and covering as many types of foreseeable problems as possible; rules that were developed in consultation with all parties (parents, teachers, students, administrators, etc.) and were reviewed and fine tuned each year; rules that used unpleasant consequences for poor behaviors; rules that reported any criminal act to the police; and finally, rules developed by

teachers that governed conduct in their classrooms. These rules were annually distributed to all parties, along with their explanations and the consequences of poor behavior.

Discipline, Wynne contends, makes schools more humane and communal.

Rubel and Blauvelt (1994) detailed several sound, commonsense steps to taking a “snapshot” of a district’s current safety “environment.” Their article advocated stepping back from time to time to do an internal perception check of the rules, policies, infrastructure concerns, and staff. Rubel and Blauvelt advocate clarity in the rules, a review of school sites that includes internal and external factors, and review of staff placement and training. For example, on the infrastructure front, they recommend a periodic walking review of the exterior of all district buildings to evaluate lights, exits, shrubbery, locks, and traffic patterns. This is one of the few resources this researcher found that approached student discipline as part of a greater overall system. Rubel and Blauvelt astutely point out that staff training, policies, practices, and facilities overlap and have a profound effect on one another.

Much commonality exists between the literature and research presented here and the background information used to construct this researcher’s research. Recurring themes of ensuring clarity of rules, involving stakeholder groups in determining rules consequences, reviewing policies and procedures over time, and building consensus surface throughout most of the literature. Over the last four years, this researcher has embraced many of these same constructs. Some of these ideas came from diligent research, some by common sense, some by lifting the best ideas and practices from other districts, and still others by luck.

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

General Design

This quantitative study documented the effect of eliminating the in-school disciplinary study hall on detentions, suspensions, expulsions, and staff perceptions of the disciplinary environment.

To gauge teacher perception of the disciplinary environment, a survey titled Westville High School Teacher Feedback Survey consisting of 13 questions was developed and distributed (see Appendix A). Each question in the survey was rated with a traditional scale of measurement: Strongly agree, Agree, Not sure, Disagree, and Strongly disagree.

Survey statements recorded staff perceptions for the number of detentions they had given; the effectiveness of the 2-hour, after-school detentions and Saturday study hall; the atmosphere of the school; and whether they felt supported by the administration in their efforts to manage student behavior.

To answer remaining research questions, data were gathered from school disciplinary records beginning with the 1992-1993 school year and concluding with the 1998-1999 school year. The data collected included the number of out-of-school suspensions, the number of expulsions, the number of students truant, the number of assignments to in-school disciplinary study halls, and the number of 30-minute, after-school detentions.

Sample and Population

A perception survey designed to gauge the effectiveness of eliminating the in-school disciplinary study hall was given to all Westville High School teachers with two or more

years of full time service in the high school.

There are 25 teachers in the high school, 16 of whom are female and 9 are male. The average length of employment is eight years. Only five teachers live within district boundaries, the other twenty commute from various communities in the area. Approximately 20% of the staff have one or more advanced degrees beyond the bachelor's level.

There is a very well established "old guard" of teachers who tend to resist change and at times are known to intimidate, if not outright bully, the younger members of the staff. The newer teachers in the building tend to be more productive and willing to try new approaches to learning, provided they do not outshine the old guard too much or too often.

The teachers are segmented into departments that are defined by core area and have designated department heads. Those teachers outside the core areas (e.g., physical education, band, chorus, art, etc.) are assigned to core area departments that most closely align with their respective instruction. This style of grouping assures that no department is comprised of only one staff member.

The administrative management style is a combination of site-based management and authoritarian control. There is considerable long standing tension between the administration and the local union for a variety of reasons.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

The questionnaire, Appendix A, was designed by this researcher to address the research questions and objectives posed. The questionnaire was administered during September, 1998. Approximately 95% of the questionnaires were returned. The

questionnaire was designed to keep all responses anonymous and all data collected confidential.

Use of the questionnaire provided the teachers with a vehicle to reflect on their perceptions of the disciplinary atmosphere following the elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall. To obtain data relative to the impact on the suspensions and expulsions, data were drawn from district records over the previous five years. These data were collected from end of the year summary reports.

Data Analysis

The data collected by the survey were analyzed to determine teacher perceptions relative to the current disciplinary atmosphere. Questions from the survey were specifically designed to reflect the research questions. The surveys were tabulated by hand, and tables were constructed to illustrate the outcome. The outcome tables used document the number and percent for each scale response recorded on each question. The survey data analysis concluded with a statistical summary and comment.

The historical data from the district files from a five year period were summarized and graphed to determine discipline trends before and after the elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall.

Finally, the researcher compared and contrasted the data recorded with the teachers perceptions to determine their relatedness and drew conclusions on the real and perceived effectiveness of eliminating the in-school disciplinary study hall.

Chapter 4

Results

Overview

The results are presented for each of the following research questions. Results have been drawn from the survey statement and the historical data.

1. What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the number of after-school detentions?
2. What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the number of out-of-school suspensions?
3. What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the number of expulsions?
4. What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the perceptions of staff regarding the disciplinary atmosphere of the school?

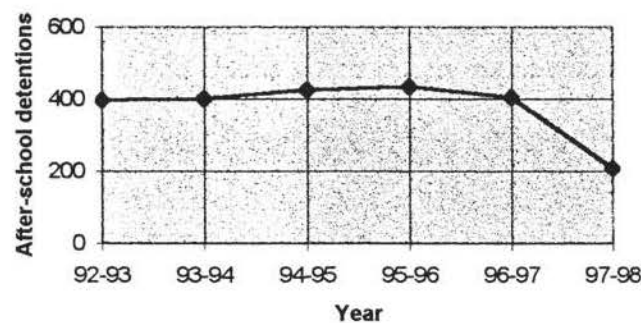


Figure 1. Effect of eliminating in-school disciplinary study hall on number of after-school detentions.

Results for Research Question 1

Historical data from the district database were used to answer research question 1: What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the number of after-school detentions? Figure 1 shows a clear decline in after-school detentions following the 1996-1997 decision to eliminate the in-school disciplinary study hall. Between the 1995-1996 and the 1997-1998 school years, 51% fewer 30-minute, after-school detentions were given—a dramatic decline.

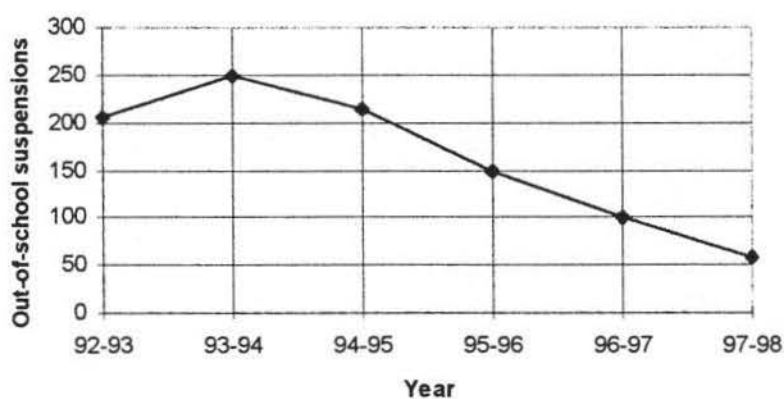


Figure 2. Effect of eliminating in-school disciplinary study hall on the number of out-of-school suspensions.

Results for Research Question 2

Historical data from district records were used to address research question 2: What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the number of out-of-school suspensions? The 0-300 scale on Figure 2 represents the number of suspensions assigned to students, not the number of days suspended. The figure illustrates two trends.

First, out-of-school suspensions reached a peak during the 1993-1994 school year, the first year the district began to administratively evaluate the effectiveness of all disciplinary policies and procedures. Second, there is a definite, almost linear, decline in the number of out-of-school suspensions starting with the 1994-1995 school year.

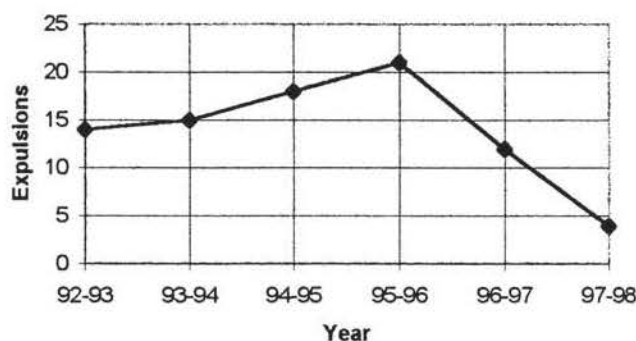


Figure 3. Effect of elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall on number of expulsions.

Results for Research Question 3

Historical data from district records were used to address research question 3: What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the number of expulsions? The 0-25 scale in Figure 3 represents the number of expulsions assigned to students. The length of the expulsion varied from 1 semester up to 2 years. The figure also illustrates two trends. First, expulsions, which had been steadily increasing, reached a peak during the 1995-1996 school year. Second, a clear decline in the number of expulsions starting with the 1996-1997 school year continued through 1997-1998. Expulsions during the 1997-1998 year represent almost a two-thirds decrease from the all-time high

Results For Research Question 4

A survey instrument was used to research question 4: What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the perceptions of staff regarding the disciplinary atmosphere of the school? The data used to answer this question were drawn from survey statements 1 through 13. The following scale was used to rate responses: Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), 3 Not sure (NS), Disagree (D), Strongly disagree (SD). Tables 1 through 13 detail both the number and percentage of responses at each point in the rating scale.

Table 1

Responses to Survey Statement 1

30-minute detentions needed have declined

Responses	No. of responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Strongly agree (SA)	0	0.00
Agree (A)	8	44.44
Not sure (NS)	6	33.33
Disagree (D)	1	5.56
Strongly disagree (SD)	3	16.67

Table 1 indicates staff were split on this issue. Although more than 40% agreed with the survey statement, the combined percentage of NS, D, and SD responses exceeded the percentage of those who agreed. Especially noteworthy were the 16% who strongly disagreed.

Table 2.

Responses to Survey Statement 2

Students dislike 2-hour detentions

Responses	No. of responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Strongly agree (SA)	8	44.44
Agree (A)	6	33.34
Not sure (NS)	2	11.11
Disagree (A)	0	0.00
Strongly disagree	2	11.11

Sixty-six percent of teachers strongly agreed or agreed with this statement.

Punishment for rules infractions must be unpleasant to be effective. Although not the only measurement of success, the data in Table 2 suggested that the teachers perceived that the students did not like to be given 2-hour detentions.

Table 3.

Responses to Survey Statement 3

Students dislike Saturday study halls

Responses	No. of responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Strongly agree (SA)	10	55.56
Agree (A)	5	27.78
Not sure (NS)	2	11.11
Disagree (D)	0	0.00
Strongly disagree (SD)	1	5.56

Teacher perceptions of students' dislike of Saturday study hall (Table 3) correlated well with the data in Table 2. Teachers interact daily with students and have ample opportunity to gauge the student opinion on Saturday study halls. A full 75% of teacher

responses indicated agreement or strong agreement with survey statement 3.

Table 4.

Responses to Survey Statement 4

Students are more disruptive

Responses	No. of responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Strongly agree (SA)	0	0.00
Agree (A)	1	5.56
Not sure (NS)	3	16.67
Disagree (D)	5	27.78
Strongly disagree (SD)	9	50.00

Table 4 shows that more than 75% of the teachers disagreed with the statement that CUSD #2 students were more disruptive in the 1997-1998 school year than at any time in the past. This result correlates with the results from survey statements 2 and 3 and suggests that the teachers perceived the student discipline problems were beginning to be controlled.

Table 5.

Responses to Survey Statement 5

Students used to get into trouble purposely

Responses	No. of responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Strongly agree (SA)	5	27.78
Agree (A)	8	44.44
Not sure (NS)	2	11.11
Disagree (D)	2	11.11
Strongly disagree (SD)	1	5.56

The statement in Table 5 reflected past teacher comments suggesting that students intentionally misbehaved so they could spend the day with a friend who had been given a previous assignment to the study hall. This statement was included in the survey to gauge how teachers perceived the effectiveness of the former in-school disciplinary study hall. More than 66% of the respondents agreed with survey statement 5, validating the conclusion that the teachers viewed the in-school disciplinary study hall as an ineffective deterrent to misbehavior.

Table 6.

Responses to Survey Statement 6

Students used time wisely during study hall

Responses	No. of responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Strongly agree (SA)	2	11.11
Agree (A)	2	11.11
Not sure (NS)	8	44.45
Disagree (D)	4	22.22
Strongly disagree (SD)	2	11.11

Historically, the in-school disciplinary study hall was viewed by some members of the staff as a place where students wasted time or slept. Survey statement 6 addressed teacher perception on this issue. Although more than 41% of teachers who responded to the survey disagreed with the statement (indicating they perceived students wasted time in the in-school disciplinary study hall), an additional 41% responded that they were not sure. This data contradicted the researcher's assumption that most staff felt students misused

their time in the disciplinary study hall.

Table 7.

Responses to Survey Statement 7

Student detentions for lack of homework has not been effective

Response	No. of responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Strongly agree (SA)	0	0.00
Agree (A)	8	44.45
Not sure (NS)	4	22.22
Disagree (D)	6	33.33
Strongly disagree (SD)	0	0.00

The purpose of survey statement 7 was to measure the overall disciplinary environment not related to the elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall. The staff was evenly divided on this issue, with approximately 11% more teachers agreeing than disagreeing with the statement.

Table 8.

Responses to Survey Statement 8

The disciplinary atmosphere has improved

Responses	No. of responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Strongly agree (SA)	2	11.11
Agree (A)	9	50.00
Not sure (NS)	5	27.77
Disagree (D)	1	5.56
Strongly disagree (SD)	1	5.56

Table 8 shows that 61% of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the atmosphere at school had improved since the in-school discipline study hall was eliminated. This indicated a perception by teachers that the 2-hour, after-school detentions and Saturday detentions were effective disciplinary tools.

Table 9.

Responses to Survey Statement 9

Out-of-school suspensions have gone up

Responses	No. of responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Strongly agree (SA)	2	11.11
Agree (A)	5	27.77
Not sure (NS)	10	55.56
Disagree (D)	1	5.56
Strongly disagree (SD)	0	0.00

Teachers surveyed indicated that they generally agreed with survey statement 9. It is noteworthy that more than 55% of the teachers responded that they were not sure, which may indicate a flaw in the discipline report system.

Table 10.

Responses to Survey Statement 10

Expulsions have gone up

Responses	No. of responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Strongly agree (SA)	1	5.56
Agree (A)	1	5.56
Not sure (NS)	13	72.22

Disagree (D)	3	16.66
Strongly disagree (SD)	0	0.00

It is troubling that 72% of teachers reported that they were not sure this statement was true. However, the statement was included in the survey to test the perceptions of several of the “old guard” teachers that expulsions would increase dramatically with the elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall. Figure 3 verifies that this did not happen.

Table 11.

Responses to Survey Statement 11

I feel safe at this school

Response	No. of responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Strongly agree (SA)	5	27.78
Agree (A)	10	55.54
Not sure (NS)	1	5.56
Disagree (D)	1	5.56
Strongly disagree (SD)	1	5.56

Survey statement 11 was included to gauge teacher perception about the comfort and safety of the instructional environment. A high percentage of responses in the “disagree” or “strongly disagree” categories would imply there were problems with the disciplinary code or its application. Conversely, a strong acceptance (as documented in Table 11) suggests teachers were generally content with the disciplinary atmosphere.

Table 12.

Responses to Survey Statement 12

Dean of students support

Responses	No. of responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Strongly agree (SA)	13	72.22
Agree (A)	4	22.22
Not sure (NS)	0	0.00
Disagree (D)	0	0.00
Strongly disagree (SD)	1	5.56

Survey statement 12 gauged staff perception that they were supported in their efforts by the Dean of Students office. If teachers' perceptions of the disciplinary atmosphere had been very negative, this statement could have been used to separate problems with student discipline from lack of administrative support. Statement 12 received the highest level of agreement in the survey, indicating teacher perception that the dean was effective.

Table 13.

Responses to Survey Statement 13

Eliminating the in-school disciplinary study has been effective.

Responses	No. of responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Strongly agree (SA)	1	5.56
Agree (A)	9	50.00
Not sure (NS)	7	38.88
Disagree (D)	0	0.00
Strongly disagree (SD)	1	5.56

This survey statement directly addressed the main focus of this research. Only one

person in the survey responded negatively to this statement. The staff had strongly opposed eliminating the in-school disciplinary study hall when it was first presented as an option. The strong agreement with survey statement 13 indicated staff perceived that eliminating the study hall helped control the widespread discipline problems experienced in previous years.

Chapter 5

Summary, Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

This study investigated the effect(s) that elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall had on one small, East Central Illinois high school and the effect of that act on teacher perceptions of the disciplinary environment. Historical data from the Westville High School CUSD #2 database were used to determine the number of suspensions and expulsions before and after the in-school disciplinary study hall was eliminated. A follow-up survey was given to teachers to gauge their perceptions of the disciplinary environment before and after the in-school disciplinary study hall was eliminated.

The specific research questions addressed by this study were the following:

1. What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the number of after-school detentions?
2. What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the number of out-of-school suspensions?
3. What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the number of expulsions?
4. What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the perceptions of staff regarding the disciplinary atmosphere of the school?

To gather data for research question 4, the survey in Appendix A was administered to 21 teachers with two or more years of experience in the high school. There was an 86% return rate. It was necessary for teachers to have been employed in the district for two years so they could adequately respond to the survey that pertained to student activity

before and after the in-school disciplinary study hall was eliminated. The survey was designed to determine if the elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall had (a) increased or decreased teachers' direct disciplinary responsibilities, (b) influenced teachers' perceptions that students were responding to the new policies, and (c) increased teachers' perceptions that the school was safer. The survey group comprised 12 females and 9 males. No surveys were spoiled and no respondent left questions unanswered. Descriptive statistics and charts were used to analyze the data collected for each research question.

Findings

The results for research question 1, "What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the number of after-school detentions?", indicated a decline of approximately 55% in 30-minute, after-school detentions given by teachers following the 1996-1997 decision to eliminate the in-school disciplinary study hall.

The results for research question 2, "What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the number of out-of-school suspensions?", revealed that out-of-school suspensions reached a peak during the 1993-1994 school year and that a definite decline in the number of out-of-school suspensions started with the 1994-1995 school year.

The results for research question 3, "What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the number of expulsions?", illustrated two trends. First, expulsions reached a peak during the 1995-1996 school year. Second, a decline in the number of expulsions started with the 1996-1997 school year and continued through 1997-1998.

The results for research question 4, What effect did elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall have on the perceptions of staff regarding the disciplinary atmosphere of the school? were derived from the staff survey instrument. Survey statement 1, I have not needed to give as many 30 minute detentions since the disciplinary study hall was eliminated. revealed that 75% of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed they were giving fewer detentions as a result of the elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall. Survey statements 2 and 3; Students seem to dislike staying after school for 2 hour detentions and Students seem to dislike being assigned Saturday study halls, indicated that 66% of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that students did not like the 2-hour, after-school detentions or Saturday study halls.

Survey statements 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8; Students in this school are more disruptive than ever, Students used to get into trouble so they could spend the day in directive study halls with their friends, Students used their time wisely when assigned an in-school disciplinary study hall, Assigning students detentions for lack of homework has not reduced the number of students failing my class, and The disciplinary atmosphere has improved since the in-school disciplinary study hall was eliminated,. addressed the teacher perceptions of the disciplinary environment. Seventy five percent of the teachers disagreed with the statement that Westville High School students were more disruptive than ever; one person strongly disagreed. More than 66% of the respondents agreed with the statement that students had deliberately misbehaved so they could spend the day in the in-school disciplinary study hall. More than 41% of teachers surveyed indicated they perceived students wasted time in the in-school disciplinary study hall. More than half of the teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that the school's disciplinary atmosphere had

improved since the in-school disciplinary study hall was eliminated.

Survey statements 9 and 10; The number of students expelled has gone up since the in-school disciplinary study hall was eliminated, and The number of students assigned out of school suspensions has gone up since the in-school disciplinary study hall was eliminated, gauged teacher perceptions regarding the number of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. Survey responses indicated teachers were not aware of the number of expulsions and suspensions before or after the elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall. More than 58% said they were not sure that the number of suspensions had increased with the elimination of the study hall; 67% responded they were not sure about a change in the number of expulsions.

Survey statements 11, 12, and 13; I feel safe at this school, I feel that the dean of students supports my efforts to keep order in my classroom, and Eliminating the in-school disciplinary study hall has been an effective deterrent to disciplinary problems. were included to determine whether teachers felt safe and supported in the current environment and whether the teachers agreed with the decision to eliminate the in-school disciplinary study hall. Responses strongly indicated that teachers felt safe in the school and that they were being supported by the dean of students in their effort to maintain discipline. Responses indicated teachers agreed that eliminating the in-school disciplinary study hall was a positive step.

Conclusions

The 1994-1995 school year represented the first year Westville Community School District #2 administration began to evaluate the effectiveness of all high school disciplinary policies and procedures to address the problems of large numbers of suspensions,

expulsions, and daily incidents. The in-school disciplinary study hall had developed a reputation among staff and students as an ineffective consequence for misbehavior. During the 1994-1995 year and the years that followed, disciplinary policies were reviewed and enhanced. Although improvements in the disciplinary environment were achieved, the administration determined more stringent steps needed to be taken. Eventually, the in-school disciplinary study hall was eliminated, beginning with the 1997-1998 school year.

The researcher demonstrated, through a review of the historical discipline data, that the number of 30-minute, after-school detentions declined dramatically during the 1997-1998 school year. Detention levels for the five years prior to 1997-1998 had averaged more than 400 per year. During the 1997-1998 school year, the number of detentions assigned fell to just over 200.

The researcher found that the percentage of out-of-school suspensions between 1993-1994 and 1997-1998 dropped from approximately 240 to approximately 90 (see Figures 1 through 3). In addition, the number of expulsions fell from an all-time high of 21 during 1995-1996 to a record low of 4 during 1997-1998. From these findings, the researcher concluded that changes in the administrative policies and procedures, which happened at approximately the same time the dramatic fall in detentions, suspensions, and expulsions occurred, had a positive impact on the disciplinary atmosphere at Westville High School. Figures 1 through 3 illustrate that in 1997-1998, the year the in-school disciplinary study hall was eliminated, the administrative policies and procedural changes had the largest impact on detentions, suspensions, and expulsions.

From the results of the teacher survey, the researcher concluded that the in-school disciplinary study hall was an ineffective method of discipline as evidenced by the teachers

endorsement of the 2-hour, after-school detentions, and Saturday detentions as effective disciplinary tools. More than 66% of the teachers agreed that students do not like to spend time serving detentions of any type. In addition, the researcher concluded that the teachers felt supported by the dean of students in their efforts to maintain control. More than 70% of the teachers agreed that student behavior has improved with the elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall.

The researcher concluded from the teacher survey that the teaching staff could not quantify the impact of the disciplinary changes, including the removal of the in-school disciplinary study hall. Teacher survey statements 9 and 10 asked teachers to rate their perception of the increase or decrease in the number of suspensions and expulsions following the administrative changes and the elimination of the in-school disciplinary study hall. The survey revealed that 58.33% of teachers were not sure of the impact on suspensions and 66.67% were not sure of the impact on expulsions. The researcher concluded that additional effort must be made to communicate disciplinary trends as they occur.

The staff had initially been opposed to replacing the in-school disciplinary study hall with longer, after-school and Saturday detentions. Based on the survey results, the researcher concluded that the teaching staff perceived that eliminating the in-school disciplinary study hall was a positive step toward controlling the widespread discipline problems experienced in previous years.

Recommendations

Based on the historical data and the teacher perception survey, the researcher recommends that the district continue to use the 2-hour, after-school detentions and the

Saturday study halls in place of the in-school disciplinary study hall. The historical data have quantified a positive impact on number of detentions, suspensions, and expulsions over a 5-year period. The researcher recommends that the administration research and develop improved communication methods to help teachers become aware of the effectiveness of the new disciplinary policies.

The researcher also recommends a follow-up analysis at the end of three years to determine if the detention, suspension, and expulsion rates continue to decline. If they do, the researcher recommends this research study be published for a wider audience.

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Appendix A

**WESTVILLE HIGH SCHOOL
TEACHER FEEDBACK SURVEY**

PURPOSE: Now that we have gone a full year without it, the administration would like to ask the high school teachers for their perception(s) about the effectiveness of the two hour after school detentions and the Saturday school as replacements for the in-school disciplinary study hall. Your input is very important to us and is greatly appreciated.

DIRECTIONS: Please respond honestly and frankly to the following statements. Do not put your name on the survey as all responses are anonymous. The survey has not been coded in any way to identify your individual responses. If you are unsure of your answer or do not have sufficient information to respond to a statement, please leave it blank. Return the survey to my mailbox by Friday, September 25th. Use the following scale to rate your responses:

1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly Disagree

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. I have not needed to give as many 30 minute detentions since the disciplinary study hall was eliminated. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Students seem to dislike staying after school for 2 hour detentions | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Students seem to dislike being assigned Saturday study halls. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Students in this school are more disruptive than ever. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Students used to get into trouble so they could spend the day in directive study halls with their friends. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. Students used their time wisely when assigned an in-school disciplinary study hall. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. Assigning students detentions for lack of homework has not reduced the number of students failing my class. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. The disciplinary atmosphere has improved since the in-school disciplinary study hall was eliminated. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. The number of students assigned out of school suspensions has gone up since the in-school disciplinary study hall was eliminated. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. The number of students expelled has gone up since the in-school disciplinary study hall was eliminated. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 11. I feel safe at this school. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. I feel that the dean of students supports my efforts to keep order in my classroom. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. Eliminating the in-school disciplinary study hall has been an effective deterrent to disciplinary problems. | 1 2 3 4 5 |